



Discussion Guide

A Splash of Red:

The Life and Art of Horace Pippin

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Knopf Books For Young Readers

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"Paint a picture for us, Horace!" his sisters cried. And Horace did. He painted everyday scenes in natural colors; then he added a splash of red.

About The Book

From the time he could hold a piece of charcoal, Horace Pippin loved to draw. He drew pictures for his sisters, his grandmother, and his classmates. When he left school to support his family, he made pictures between stacking grain and shoveling coal. And while fighting in France during World War I, with planes droning overhead, Horace filled his notebooks with drawings from the trenches—until he was severely wounded. When Horace returned home, he couldn't even lift his right arm. It seemed he might never make art again. But Horace loved it too much to stop trying...

Horace Pippin was a self-taught painter who turned memories, stories, everyday surroundings and harsh struggles into beautiful art—art that is displayed in museums and galleries across the country. With warm lyrical text and inviting illustrations that evoke and honor Horace's style, Caldecott Honor-winning team Jen Bryant and Melissa Sweet introduce young readers to an American treasure—a celebrated artist and a remarkable man.

Vocabulary

Familiarize students with the following words as they relate to World War II: *regiment, trenches, shells, droned*.

Things to Think About Before Reading the Book

1. Research the era and begin a time line of important events in our country and the world during the late 1800's, the post-Civil War era.
2. Locate West Chester on a map. What major cities are near West Chester, PA?
3. List chores that you perform at home. As you read, think about the chores Horace had. How are they similar or different? Which do you think you would rather do? Why?
4. In the story, Horace wins an art contest. Have you ever won an award or been praised for a job well done? How did it make you feel? What impact did it have on your life?

Things to Think About After Reading the Book

1. In the story, Horace's Grandma says, "The biggest part of you is inside, where no one can see." Compare her words to those of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."
2. What evidence does the author and illustrator provide that tells us Horace was always an artist?
3. Revisit the time line (see #1 above) and extend it to include the important events that occurred in the country and the world throughout Pippin's lifetime (1888-1946). Create

a second time line to trace important events in Horace’s own life. Compare the two time lines. How did outside events influence Horace’s personal life?

4. The illustrator embedded quotes from Horace Pippin in her artwork on many of the pages. Return to the book and make a list of these quotes. How do Pippin’s words reveal his character and deepen our understanding of his actions and motivations? What other events and actions in the book help us understand more about his character?
5. What is significant about the colors Horace used in his paintings, particularly the splash of red?
6. How do the illustrations contribute to the tone and mood of the book?
7. How is the job of a writer and an artist similar? What evidence of this do you find in the book?
8. In fairy tales everyone always lives happily ever after. In real life that is not always the case. Do you think Horace Pippin had a happily-ever-after life? Why or why not?

Activities

1. Return to the text for Horace Pippin’s quotes. Find one that speaks to you and write about what you think it means or how it relates to you.
2. Horace Pippin was a keen observer of life. Over the course of a day or week keep a sketch book and draw or paint the scenes you are observing. How can you use these observations to tell a story?
3. Examine how the author effectively used lists to create pictures in the reader’s mind and add vivid details. How are these lists similar and/or different? Make sure you look at the punctuation as well as the words. Can you find examples of lists in other books you know?
4. Find out more about veterans’ associations in your community. What kinds of events or activities do they sponsor? How could you become involved?
5. Read the “Historical Note” at the end of the book. The author discusses where Pippin found subjects for his artwork. Where can you find subjects to write about or represent in some form of art? Make a list in your writer’s notebook. Is there anything on your list that is also on Pippin’s?
6. If possible, visit an art museum that displays the work of Horace Pippin. Some locations are mentioned in the author’s “Historical Note.” What do his paintings make you see, smell, hear, taste, or feel? Do you have a favorite painting? Explain.
7. Horace Pippin shares a birthday with George Washington. Do some research to discover how their lives were similar and how they were different. Do you think they had any character traits in common? Write about it.

For further reading about Horace Pippin’s life and work, including where to find digital images of Horace’s WWI notebooks, please refer to the back matter pages of *A Splash of Red* and to the ASOR book page on the author’s website: jenbryant.com.

For additional art and hands-on activities, please visit: melissasweet.net

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This guide was prepared by Rose Cappelli, Reading Specialist, West Chester Area School District, West Chester, PA, and Dr. Lynne Dorfman, Educational Consultant and Co-director, Pennsylvania Writing & Literature Project. They are the co-authors of the Mentor Texts series, published by Stenhouse